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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 22 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council and has the honour to forward the joint declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, issued on 12 February 2016 following their first meeting, in Havana (see annex).

The Permanent Mission requests the secretariat to publish the joint declaration as a document of the thirty-first session of the Human Rights Council in all official languages of the United Nations.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 22 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

[*Russian*]

Joint declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia

The document was adopted following the meeting of His Holiness Pope Francis and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, which took place on 12 February 2016 in Havana (Cuba).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor 13:13).

1. By God the Father's will, from which all gifts come, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit Consolator, we, Pope Francis and Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, have met today in Havana. We give thanks to God, glorified in the Trinity, for this meeting, the first in history.

It is with joy that we have met like brothers in the Christian faith who encounter one another "to speak face to face" (2 Jn 12), from heart to heart, to discuss the mutual relations between the Churches, the crucial problems of our faithful, and the outlook for the progress of human civilization.

2. Our fraternal meeting has taken place in Cuba, at the crossroads of North and South, East and West. It is from this island, the symbol of the hopes of the "New World" and the dramatic events of the history of the twentieth century, that we address our words to all the peoples of Latin America and of the other continents.

It is a source of joy that the Christian faith is growing here in a dynamic way. The powerful religious potential of Latin America, its centuries-old Christian tradition, grounded in the personal experience of millions of people, are the pledge of a great future for this region.

3. By meeting far from the longstanding disputes of the "Old World", we experience with a particular sense of urgency the need for the shared labour of Catholics and Orthodox, who are called, with gentleness and respect, to give an explanation to the world of the hope in us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

4. We thank God for the gifts received from the coming into the world of His only Son. We share the same spiritual Tradition of the first millennium of Christianity. The witnesses of this Tradition are the Most Holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the saints we venerate. Among them are innumerable martyrs who have given witness to their faithfulness to Christ and have become the "seed of Christians".

5. Notwithstanding this shared Tradition of the first ten centuries, for nearly one thousand years Catholics and Orthodox have been deprived of communion in the Eucharist. We have been divided by wounds caused by old and recent conflicts, by differences inherited from our ancestors, in the understanding and expression of our faith in God, one in three Persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are pained by the loss of unity, the outcome of human weakness and of sin, which has occurred despite the priestly prayer of

Christ the Saviour: "So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you … so that they may be one, as we are one" (Jn 17:21).

6. Mindful of the permanence of many obstacles, it is our hope that our meeting may contribute to the re-establishment of this unity willed by God, for which Christ prayed. May our meeting inspire Christians throughout the world to pray to the Lord with renewed fervour for the full unity of all His disciples. In a world which yearns not only for our words but also for tangible gestures, may this meeting be a sign of hope for all people of goodwill!

7. In our determination to undertake all that is necessary to overcome the historical divergences we have inherited, we wish to combine our efforts to give witness to the Gospel of Christ and to the shared heritage of the Church of the first millennium, responding together to the challenges of the contemporary world. Orthodox and Catholics must learn to give unanimously witness in those spheres in which this is possible and necessary. Human civilization has entered into a period of epochal change. Our Christian conscience and our pastoral responsibility compel us not to remain passive in the face of challenges requiring a shared response.

8. Our gaze must firstly turn to those regions of the world where Christians are victims of persecution. In many countries of the Middle East and North Africa whole families, villages and cities of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being completely exterminated. Their churches are being barbarously ravaged and looted, their sacred objects profaned, their monuments destroyed. It is with pain that we call to mind the situation in Syria, Iraq and other countries of the Middle East, and the massive exodus of Christians from the land in which our faith was first disseminated and in which they have lived since the time of the Apostles, together with other religious communities.

9. We call upon the international community to act urgently in order to prevent the further expulsion of Christians from the Middle East. In raising our voice in defence of persecuted Christians, we wish to express our compassion for the suffering experienced by the faithful of other religious traditions who have also become victims of civil war, chaos and terrorist violence.

10. Thousands of victims have already been claimed in the violence in Syria and Iraq, which has left many other millions without a home or means of sustenance. We urge the international community to seek an end to the violence and terrorism and, at the same time, to contribute through dialogue to a swift return to civil peace. Large-scale humanitarian aid must be assured to the afflicted populations and to the many refugees seeking safety in neighbouring lands.

We call upon all those whose influence can be brought to bear upon the destiny of those kidnapped, including the Metropolitans of Aleppo, Paul and John Ibrahim, who were taken in April 2013, to make every effort to ensure their prompt liberation.

11. We lift our prayers to Christ, the Saviour of the world, asking for the return of peace in the Middle East, "the fruit of justice" (Is 32:17), so that fraternal co-existence among the various populations, Churches and religions may be strengthened, enabling refugees to return to their homes, wounds to be healed, and the souls of the slain innocent to rest in peace.

We address, in a fervent appeal, all the parts that may be involved in the conflicts to demonstrate goodwill and to take part in the negotiating table. At the same time, the international community must undertake every possible effort to end terrorism through common, joint and coordinated action. We call on all the countries involved in the struggle against terrorism to responsible and prudent action. We exhort all Christians and all believers of God to pray fervently to the providential Creator of the world to protect His

creation from destruction and not permit a new world war. In order to ensure a solid and enduring peace, specific efforts must be undertaken to rediscover the common values uniting us, based on the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

12. We bow before the martyrdom of those who, at the cost of their own lives, have given witness to the truth of the Gospel, preferring death to the denial of Christ. We believe that these martyrs of our times, who belong to various Churches but who are united by their shared suffering, are a pledge of the unity of Christians. It is to you who suffer for Christ's sake that the word of the Apostle is directed: "Beloved … rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly" (1 Pet 4:12-13).

13. Interreligious dialogue is indispensable in our disturbing times. Differences in the understanding of religious truths must not impede people of different faiths to live in peace and harmony. In our current context, religious leaders have the particular responsibility to educate their faithful in a spirit which is respectful of the convictions of those belonging to other religious traditions. Attempts to justify criminal acts with religious slogans are altogether unacceptable. No crime may be committed in God's name, "since God is not the God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33).

14. In affirming the foremost value of religious freedom, we give thanks to God for the current unprecedented renewal of the Christian faith in Russia, as well as in many other countries of Eastern Europe, formerly dominated for decades by atheist regimes. Today, the chains of militant atheism have been broken and in many places Christians can now freely confess their faith. Thousands of new churches have been built over the last quarter of a century, as well as hundreds of monasteries and theological institutions. Christian communities undertake notable works in the fields of charitable aid and social development, providing diversified forms of assistance to the needy. Orthodox and Catholics often work side by side. Giving witness to the values of the Gospel they attest to the existence of the shared spiritual foundations of human co-existence.

15. At the same time, we are concerned about the situation in many countries in which Christians are increasingly confronted by restrictions to religious freedom, to the right to witness to one's convictions and to live in conformity with them. In particular, we observe that the transformation of some countries into secularized societies, estranged from all reference to God and to His truth, constitutes a grave threat to religious freedom. It is a source of concern for us that there is a current curtailment of the rights of Christians, if not their outright discrimination, when certain political forces, guided by an often very aggressive secularist ideology, seek to relegate them to the margins of public life.

16. The process of European integration, which began after centuries of blood-soaked conflicts, was welcomed by many with hope, as a guarantee of peace and security. Nonetheless, we invite vigilance against an integration that is devoid of respect for religious identities. While remaining open to the contribution of other religions to our civilization, it is our conviction that Europe must remain faithful to its Christian roots. We call upon Christians of Eastern and Western Europe to unite in their shared witness to Christ and the Gospel, so that Europe may preserve its soul, shaped by two thousand years of Christian tradition.

17. Our gaze is also directed to those facing serious difficulties, who live in extreme need and poverty while the material wealth of humanity increases. We cannot remain indifferent to the destinies of millions of migrants and refugees knocking on the doors of wealthy nations. The unrelenting consumerism of some more developed countries is gradually depleting the resources of our planet. The growing inequality in the distribution of material goods increases the feeling of the injustice of the international order that has emerged.

18. The Christian churches are called to defend the demands of justice, the respect for peoples' traditions, and an authentic solidarity towards all those who suffer. We Christians cannot forget that "God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, that no human being might boast before God" (1 Cor 1:27-29).

19. The family is the natural centre of human life and society. We are concerned about the crisis in the family in many countries. Orthodox and Catholics share the same conception of the family, and are called to witness that it is a path of holiness, testifying to the faithfulness of the spouses in their mutual interaction, to their openness to the procreation and rearing of their children, to solidarity between the generations and to respect for the weakest.

20. The family is based on marriage, an act of freely given and faithful love between a man and a woman. It is love that seals their union and teaches them to accept one another as a gift. Marriage is a school of love and faithfulness. We regret that other forms of cohabitation have been placed on the same level as this union, while the concept, consecrated in the biblical tradition, of paternity and maternity as the distinct vocation of man and woman in marriage is being banished from the public conscience.

21. We call on all to respect the inalienable right to life. Millions are denied the very right to be born into the world. The blood of the unborn cries out to God (cf. Gen 4:10).

The emergence of so-called euthanasia leads elderly people and the disabled begin to feel that they are a burden on their families and on society in general.

We are also concerned about the development of biomedical reproduction technology, as the manipulation of human life represents an attack on the foundations of human existence, created in the image of God. We believe that it is our duty to recall the immutability of Christian moral principles, based on respect for the dignity of the individual called into being according to the Creator's plan.

22. Today, in a particular way, we address young Christians. You, young people, have the task of not hiding your talent in the ground (cf. Mt 25:25), but of using all the abilities God has given you to confirm Christ's truth in the world, incarnating in your own lives the evangelical commandments of the love of God and of one's neighbour. Do not be afraid of going against the current, defending God's truth, to which contemporary secular norms are often far from conforming.

23. God loves each of you and expects you to be His disciples and apostles. Be the light of the world so that those around you may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:14, 16). Raise your children in the Christian faith, transmitting to them the pearl of great price that is the faith (cf. Mt 13:46) you have received from your parents and forbears. Remember that "you have been purchased at a great price" (1 Cor 6:20), at the cost of the death on the cross of the Man-God Jesus Christ.

24. Orthodox and Catholics are united not only by the shared Tradition of the Church of the first millennium, but also by the mission to preach the Gospel of Christ in the world today. This mission entails mutual respect for members of the Christian communities and excludes any form of proselytism.

We are not competitors but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world. We urge Catholics and Orthodox in all countries to learn to live together in peace and love, and to be "in harmony with one another" (Rm 15:5). Consequently, it cannot be accepted that disloyal means be used to incite believers to pass from one Church to another, denying them their religious freedom

and their traditions. We are called upon to put into practice the precept of the apostle Paul: "Thus I aspire to proclaim the gospel not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on another's foundation" (Rm 15:20).

25. It is our hope that our meeting may also contribute to reconciliation wherever tensions exist between Greek Catholics and Orthodox. It is today clear that the past method of "uniatism", understood as the union of one community to the other, separating it from its Church, is not the way to re-establish unity. Nonetheless, the ecclesial communities which emerged in these historical circumstances have the right to exist and to undertake all that is necessary to meet the spiritual needs of their faithful, while seeking to live in peace with their neighbours. Orthodox and Greek Catholics are in need of reconciliation and of mutually acceptable forms of co-existence.

26. We deplore the hostility in Ukraine that has already caused many victims, inflicted innumerable wounds on peaceful inhabitants and thrown society into a deep economic and humanitarian crisis. We invite all the parts involved in the conflict to prudence, to social solidarity and to action aimed at constructing peace. We invite our Churches in Ukraine to work towards social harmony, to refrain from taking part in the confrontation, and to not support any further development of the conflict.

27. It is our hope that the schism between the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine may be overcome through existing canonical norms, that all the Orthodox Christians of Ukraine may live in peace and harmony, and that the Catholic communities in the country may contribute to this, in such a way that our Christian brotherhood may become increasingly evident.

28. In the contemporary world, which is both multiform yet united by a shared destiny, Catholics and Orthodox are called to work together fraternally in proclaiming the Good News of salvation, to testify together to the moral dignity and authentic freedom of the person, "so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). This world, in which the spiritual pillars of human existence are progressively disappearing, awaits from us a compelling Christian witness in all spheres of personal and social life. Much of the future of humanity will depend on our capacity to give shared witness to the Spirit of truth in these difficult times.

29. May our bold witness to God's truth and to the Good News of salvation be sustained by the Man-God Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who strengthens us with the unfailing promise: "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32)!

Christ is the well-spring of joy and hope. Faith in Him transfigures human life, fills it with meaning. This is the conviction borne of the experience of all those to whom Peter refers in his words: "Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people; you 'had not received mercy' but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet 2:10).

30. With grace-filled gratitude for the gift of mutual understanding manifested during our meeting, let us with hope turn to the Most Holy Mother of God, invoking her with the words of this ancient prayer: "We seek refuge under the protection of your mercy, Holy Mother of God". May the Blessed Virgin Mary, through her intercession, inspire fraternity in all those who venerate her, so that they may be reunited, in God's own time, in the peace and harmony of the one people of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and indivisible Trinity!

Pope Francis
Bishop of Rome

Patriarch Kirill
of Moscow and All Russia